

Status Update: Water Quality Standards in California

Parameter: Nutrients

Status:

- The CA Water Board is initiating the process to develop a nutrient policy for inland surface waters (excluding bays and estuaries) in California. The nutrient policy could include objectives and control strategies to help improve water quality in aquatic habitats by providing the benchmarks that describe conditions necessary to protect beneficial uses.
- The CA Water Board intends to develop narrative nutrient objectives, with numeric guidance to translate the narrative objectives. The numeric guidance could include the Nutrient Numeric Endpoint (NNE) framework which establishes numeric endpoints based on the response of a water body to nutrient over-enrichment (e.g., algal biomass, dissolved oxygen, etc.).
- The technical foundation of the nutrients for freshwater lakes and streams has been developed and the CA Water Board is initiating public scoping and peer review.
- Implementation guidance is being developed for statewide consistency in assessments, listings, permits, nonpoint source and TMDLs.
- CA NNE framework is also being developed for estuaries, including San Francisco Bay & Delta. The State is several years away from adopting criteria for estuaries.

Milestones:

- Public Scoping meeting held on October 27, 2011.
- Update of freshwater NNE framework document by August 2012.
- Validation of freshwater NNE spreadsheet and ambient algae assessment.
- Draft implementation guidance for freshwater.
- Charge to peer review.

Projected Dates:

- Peer review of Nutrient Policy and CA NNE in 1st Q FY13.
- Draft freshwater Nutrient Policy and staff report 2nd Q FY13.
- Respond to Comments 2nd Q FY13.
- CA State Board to consider adopting in 3rd Q FY13.
- Adoption of freshwater Nutrient Policy in 1st Q FY14.

Nutrient Water Quality Standard Values: TBD

